# GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
# COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
# LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2523
ANSWERED ON:16.12.2008
REVIVAL OF TEA ESTATES
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**Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:**

(a) whether several large tea estates are lying closed in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of workers affected therefrom, State- wise;

(c) whether the Government proposes to take over some closed tea estates in the country;

(d) if so, details thereof alongwith the number of such estates revived/re-opened during each of the last three years and current year, State-wise;

(e) the details of Provident Fund and other benefits due to the workers remained unpaid during the said period; and

(f) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to revive closed tea estates including improving the living standard of the tea workers?

## Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) There were 136 tea gardens which closed during the crisis period from 1999-2003. However, as on 1st December 2008, only 17 tea gardens− 12 in West Bengal and 5 in Kerala remain closed.

(b) No. of workers affected on account of closure of above noted 17 gardens are as under:

I. West Bengal No. of workers affected: 13387

II. Kerala No. of workers affected: 3017

(c) It has been decided to invoke section 16(E) of the Tea Act 1953 in respect of nine tea gardens - two in Kerala and seven in West Bengal. Section 16(E) provides for handing over the management of the notified closed tea gardens by the Central government to an authorized person(s) or selected entrepreneurs for management of the garden for a limited period of 5 year to begin with and extendable to another 6 years on year to year basis.

(d) The particulars are at annexed.

(e) As on 30.6.2008, a total of 558 Tea Plantation establishment were in default in payment of dues with total amount in default being Rs.8715.63 lakhs.

(f) Several steps have been taken both by the state governments of Kerala and West Bengal and also Central Governments for facilitating the reopening of the Gardens and these include the following:

Govt. of India announced rehabilitation package for 33 nos. of closed tea gardens This package provides for restructuring of outstanding bank loan into a fresh term loan and payable over a period of ten years and sharing of the accumulated interest @1/3 each by Government, the concerned bank and the borrowers, 3%interest subsidy on working capital for five years, payment of PF dues relating to damages in installments over 10 years, complete waiver of Tea Board outstanding loan, extension of Board's tea developmental schemes etc. From Tea Board, a lump−sum grant @ Rs. 1000 per worker for assistance for educational support for wards of workers and disabled persons of closed tea estates was extended during 2007-08 and 2008-09 from Human Resource development Scheme.

The Government of West Bengal has decided to draw up a complete package of benefits including electricity dues, salami, land

revenue and agricultural cess etc. for facilitating the existing owners to reopen the garden either on their own or through new owners identified by the garden owner.

The Government of Kerala has also offered many supports i.e. Free noon meal to all school going children, Wage employment under SGRY scheme, Placement of fund of Rs.5.00 Crore with the district administration, Idukki (where most closed tea gardens are located) for providing uniform and essential school books to school going children and for providing medicines to garden workers where public health system is unable to provide medical facilities, Ex-gratia amount of Rs.500.00 per worker on account of Onam Festival and Educational expenses for pursuing graduation course for the wards of the garden workers.